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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Winter Weather Delays Springbank Dam Rehabilitation

Springbank Dam has been a part of the landscape in London since 1921. Operated in conjunction with the Upper Thames River Conservation Authority (UTRCA) for the City of London, the dam serves primarily as a recreational facility for the benefit of the residents of London who enjoy Springbank Park, the Thames River and recreational boating. The arrangement of damming water during the summer and allowing the river to free flow during the fall, winter and spring has occurred uninterrupted for 79 years until July 2000 when a heavy rain storm caused river flows that impacted the structural integrity of the dam. Changes were required to improve the antiquated gate system for the benefit of the multiple users of the river. The changes planned will improve the efficiency of gate operations and ensure the proper handling of major floods and associated floating debris. The main improvement will replace 60 individual stop logs and associated hardware that dates back to the 1920's, with a system of four hydraulically operated gates that will ensure improved operation.

The Springbank Dam Rehabilitation project was approved in August 2006 with a construction timetable that balanced the needs of the Thames River fisheries with recreational boating clubs. This balance meant that construction would occur in the fall of 2006 and early winter of 2007. Weather during this time period between the end of the rowing and canoe season and start of the spring fish migration period is particularly unpredictable.

Unseasonably mild conditions, unrelenting rain storms causing frequent high Thames River water levels over the last several months have hampered the completion, planned for March 31, 2007, of the rehabilitation works to Springbank Dam. The contractor has made extra efforts in an attempt to meet the original schedule by adding additional work crews. These delays mean that the dam will only be partly repaired by April 1, 2007. This important date coincides with the start of the spring migration and spawning of fish in the Thames River. Construction work in the river is not allowed by the Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) between April 1 and June 30 due to this fish migration period. It is recognized that a healthy fish population is a component of a healthy river environment.

The result of these weather related delays is that the gates will not be at a stage that will allow the dam to be "closed" and the reservoir upstream of the dam to be filled. Recreational boating events on the river will be impacted due to low river water levels during this time. The dam will remain "open" and river water levels will remain low similar to usual winter water levels. "We recognize the impact this will have on the 2007 summer season for recreational boaters. However balancing the long term interests regarding dam safety, improved efficiency and environmental benefits of improved dam operation are paramount to benefit all groups", reports Tom Copeland, P.Eng, Manager of Wastewater and Drainage Engineering, City of London. "As a result, the river levels will seem low this summer as we continue the planned changes and complete the project over the summer". Residents may recall that a later installation date last year, which was required to accommodate the fish migration period in the river, allowed the City and partners to conduct fish monitoring to learn more about the river fish stocks.

Springbank Dam is owned by the City of London and operated under contract by the UTRCA.

